

MRFSS Striped Bass Report



1998 Atlantic Coast Marine Fishery

Millions of Striped Bass Caught Maine to North Carolina 1981 - 1998

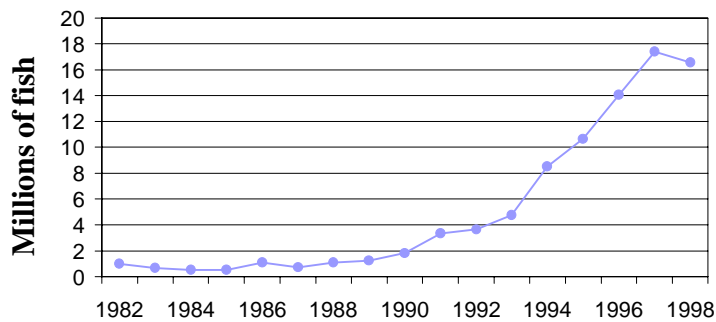


Figure 1.

Atlantic Coast Highlights *Maine through North Carolina*

- Over 16.5 million striped bass were caught (including released alive) during 1998 from Maine through North Carolina.
 - This is less than a 5% decrease from 1997.
 - Represents the second largest recorded catch since the survey began in 1979. (Figure 1)
- More striped bass were caught in the past three years (1996-1998) than from 1981-1995 combined.
- Striped bass catch, harvest and release rates in 1998 continued the increasing trend which started in the late 1980's. (Figures 2, 3a and 3b)
- As a result of management regulations and the growing popularity of "catch and release" fishing, over 91% of the striped bass caught since 1991 have been released alive.
- The total harvest estimate (excluding released alive) of striped bass in 1998 was 1.32 million fish.
 - This represents a 9.4% decrease from 1997 and is the second highest harvest estimate since 1979.
 - Weight of harvested striped bass in 1998 (12.90 million pounds) was the second highest estimate recorded since the MRFSS began.
- Directed striped bass trips (defined as any trip where an angler targeted and/or caught a striped bass), exceeded 6.6 million in 1998. (Figure 4)
- Approximately 1 in 4 saltwater trips made from Maine to North Carolina in 1997 and 1998 were directed at striped bass.

Geographic Catch Distribution by State

- In 1998 Massachusetts accounted for the greatest proportion of the total catch (45%) followed by Maryland (18%). (Figure 5)
- Maryland accounted for the most striped bass harvested in 1998 followed by Virginia and Massachusetts.
- States showing large harvest increases from 1997 to 1998 included Maryland (nearly 18% increase in numbers of fish harvested) and New Jersey (nearly a 63% increase in pounds harvested).
- In terms of harvest weight in 1998, Massachusetts was ranked number one with 23% of the coastwide total followed by New York (18%) and Maryland (15%).
- Both North Carolina and Connecticut showed the largest percent increase in fish released (42%) in 1998 relative to 1997. Massachusetts showed an increase of over 1.75 million fish released from 1997 to 1998.

Seasonal Catch Distribution

- In the North Atlantic subregion (Maine through Connecticut) the majority of the total catch and harvest for 1997 and 1998 occurred from May to October (Figure 6)
- Over 56% of the catch for the Mid-Atlantic region (New York through Virginia and including North Carolina) occurred in the months of September to December. (Figure 7)
- The MRFSS does not survey during the months of January and February in the North and Mid-Atlantic regions. Weather conditions and minimal recreational fishing effort during these months inhibit effective data collection.

Catch Distribution by Fishing Mode

- The private/rental boat mode accounted for over 78% of the total striped bass catch and nearly 79% of the total harvest in 1998. (Figure 8)
- Shore mode angling accounted for nearly 19% of the striped bass caught in 1998.
- The headboat/charterboat mode made up nearly 13% of the total harvest in 1998.
- Only 9% of the striped bass caught from shore in 1998 were harvested, while 79% of the striped bass caught in the private/rental boat fishing mode were harvested.

Summary

- Recreational fishing opportunities for Atlantic Coast striped bass continue to improve.
- The trend toward a growing conservation ethic among striped bass anglers continues.
- Many avid anglers and charterboat captains now consider striped bass exclusively a “catch and release” fishery.
- Through continued striped bass research efforts and angler education programs we can ensure that the healthy, fully recovered stocks which inhabit our waters today will be a resource to enjoy for many years to come.

*Numbers of Fish Released and Harvested
Maine through North Carolina
1982 - 1998*

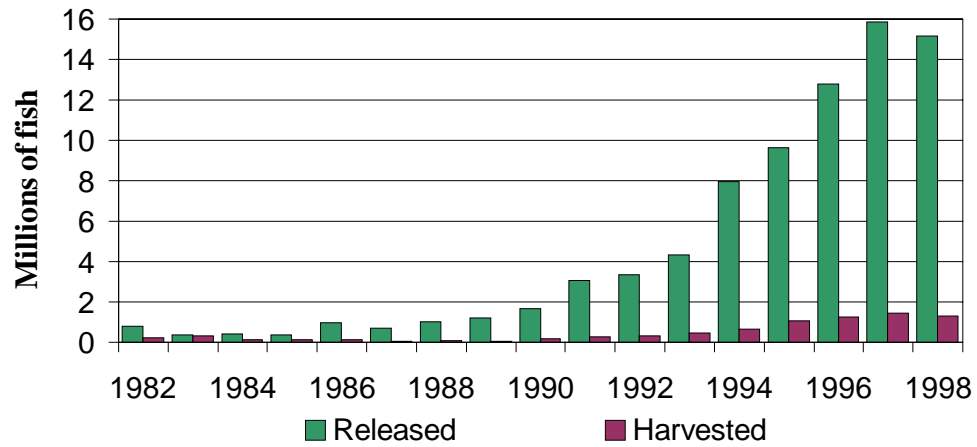


Figure 2.

*Maine through North Carolina
1982 - 1998*

Estimated Total Trips

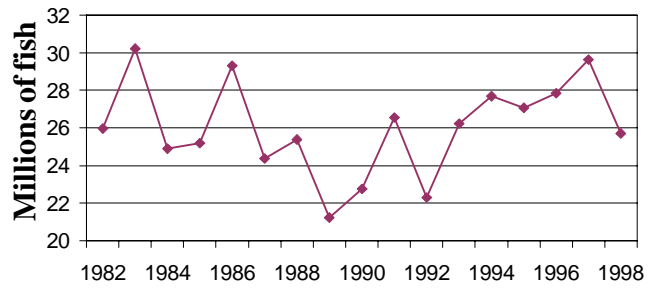


Figure 3a.

Average Catch and Harvest Rates

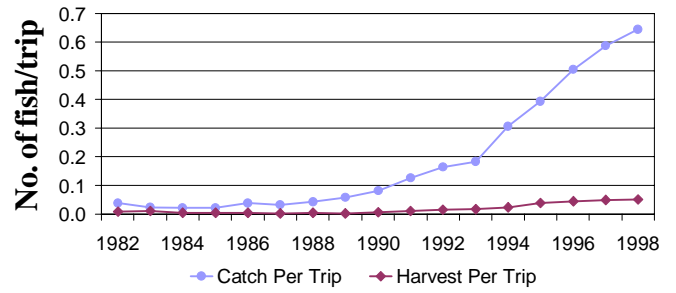


Figure 3b.

*Estimated Directed Trips for Striped Bass
Maine to North Carolina
1982 - 1998*

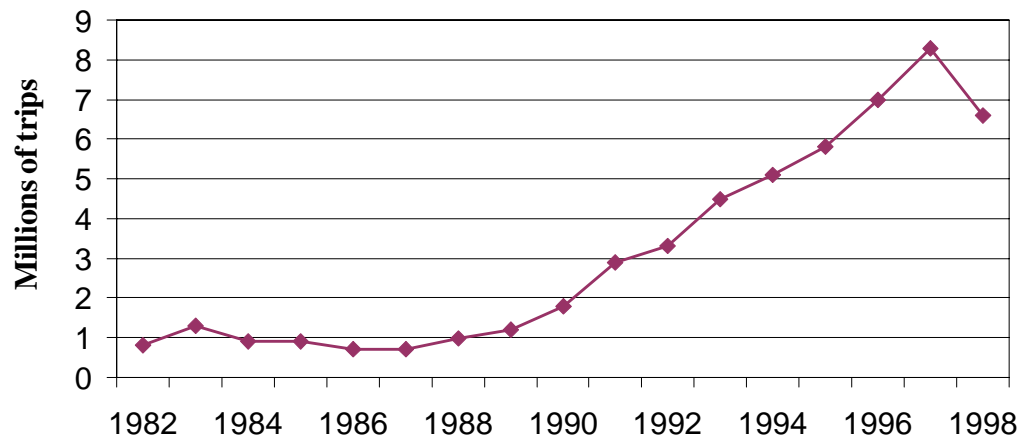
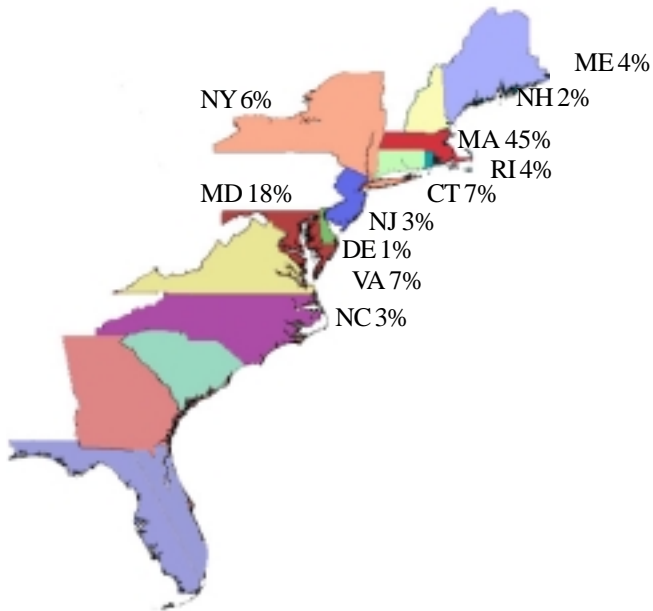


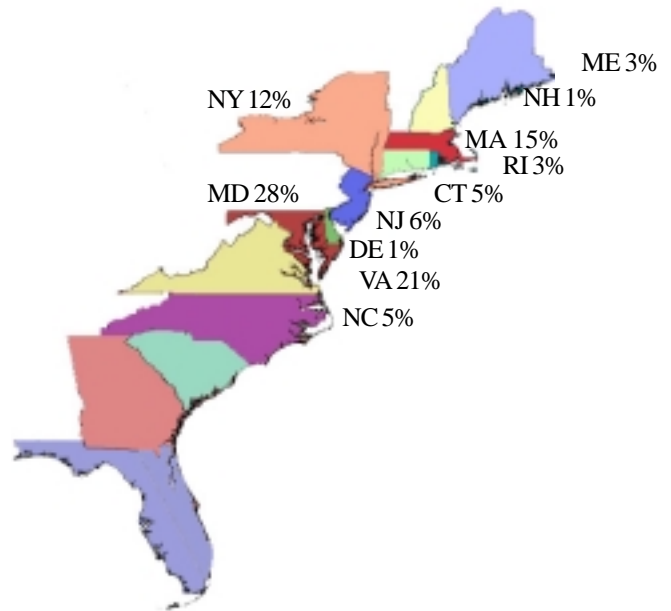
Figure 4.

***Striped Bass Catch and Harvest
Distribution by State
Maine to North Carolina
1998***

Catch Percentage (numbers of fish)



Harvest Percentage (numbers of fish)



Harvest Percentage (pounds harvested)

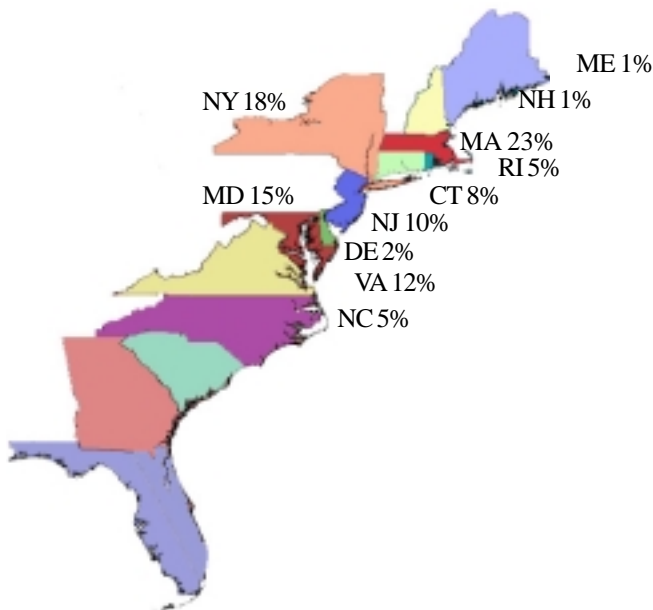


Figure 5.

***North Atlantic Striped Bass Catch
Seasonal Trend
(Based on Numbers of Fish)***

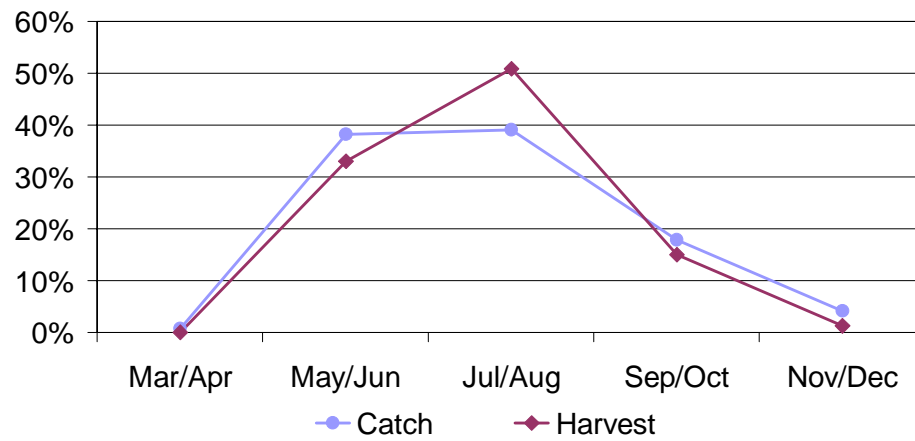


Figure 6.

***Mid-Atlantic Striped Bass Catch
Seasonal Trend
(Based on Numbers of Fish)***

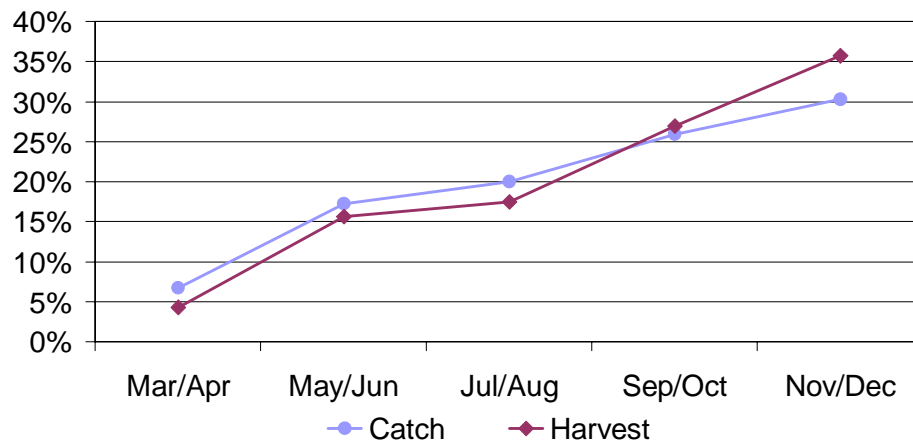


Figure 7.

*Striped Bass Catch Estimates
Maine through North Carolina
by Fishing Mode
1998*

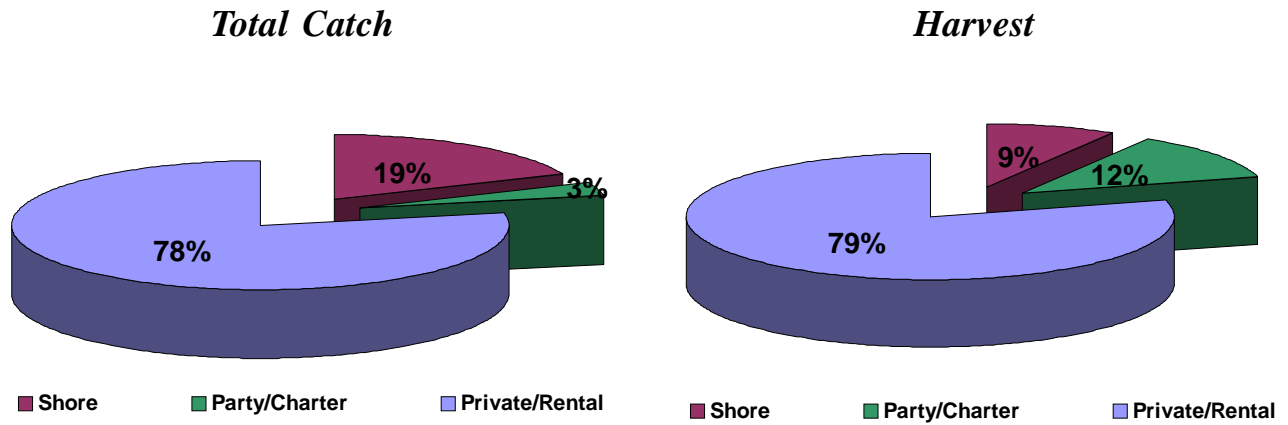
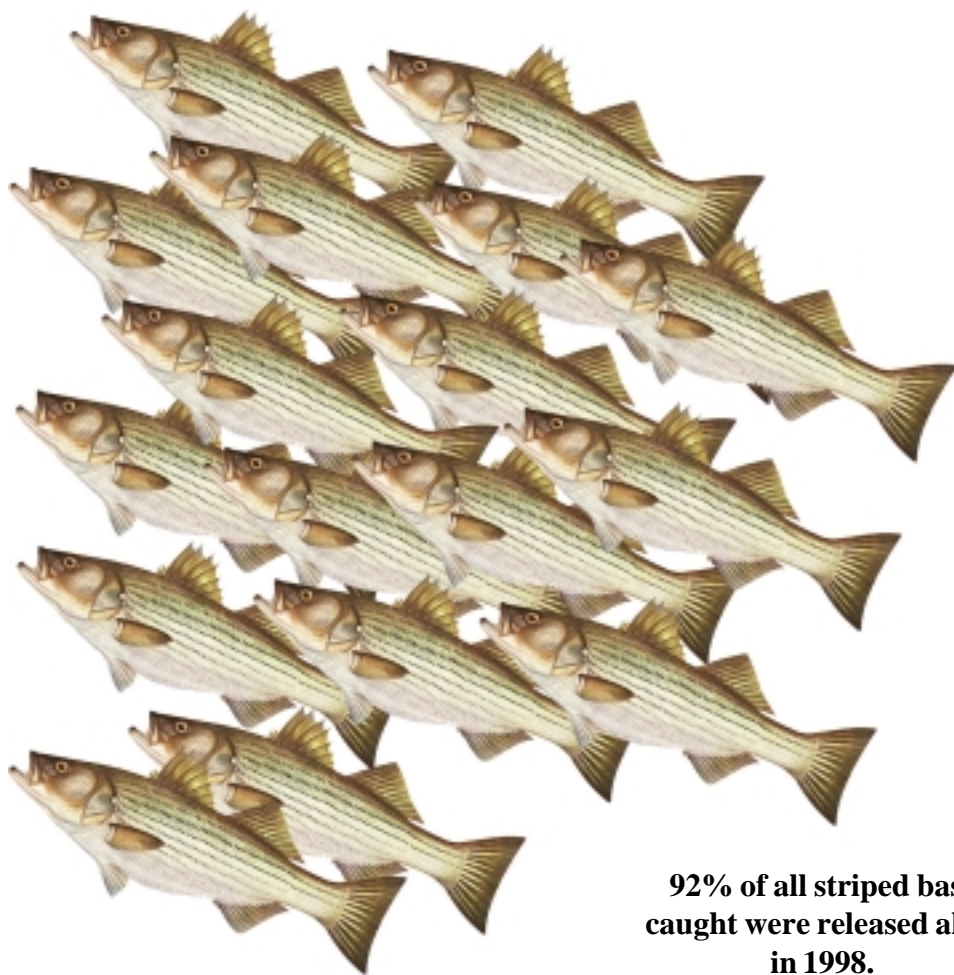


Figure 8.

Catch and release.....it's catching on!!!



**92% of all striped bass
caught were released alive
in 1998.**